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GARDENING AND CANNING MEAN A BETTER LIVING FOR THE FAMILY

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A radio talk by Eliza Pulley, 4-H club girl, Madison County, Alabama, delivered in the National 4-H club radio program, May 2, 1936, and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

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I am from Tony Community, Madison County, Alabama. I have been a club member for eight years. My father and mother are members of the "Farm and Home Demonstration Club" and my brothers and sisters are 4-H club members also.

We live on our own farm, which is located 18 miles from the city of Huntsville. We used to grow all of the cotton we possibly could but gave very little attention to the growing of vegetables for the family to eat. In fact we never canned anything but a few tomatoes, some peaches and black-berries.

Eight years ago I joined a 4-H club that was being organized in our Community. Since then I have learned to appreciate the value of gardening and canning as a means to better living for the family.

I took clothing for my project the first year, but decided on foods, gardening and canning the next year.

My parents let me use some of the space in their garden, since they had more than they thought they needed. I planted tomatoes and beans as each club girl was required to grow the vegetables she canned.

The next year my father enlarged the garden, to give me more space. I planted ten different kinds of vegetables and canned 295 quarts, exclusive of fruits and berries. This was an ample supply for the family's use during the winter months.

By the time I was ready for my third year of food preservation I had learned to use the steam pressure canner. This information proved of great advantage to me for now I could can english peas, corn, lima beans and meat with a greater degree of safety.

As president of my club, I tried to interest other girls in club work. Soon our membership had increased from 21 to 43. Most of the girls wanted to learn to can. Whenever the home agent couldn't meet the club I always gave the demonstrations.

Soon the parents began taking an interest in the club work. They became more willing to spare the girls from work in the fields so that they could attend the club meetings; they shared their gardens with the girls and bought all jars and cans they needed.

We had the use of a pressure cooker which we passed around among our club members.

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As a result of our gardening and canning activities a large variety of vegetables and fruits were stored in the pantries of our homes and you may guess that more balanced meals were served during the winter months.

Our club sent a variety of canned products to the County Fair which won first prize. I also won first prize for the best collection of canned fruits at the State Fair in 1930.

The next year I was elected the best all-around club girl and was sent to represent my County at a ten day Short Course, held at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. I later won second place in a clothes judging contest at the Southern Negro Boys and Girls 4-H Club Camp which was also held at Tuskegee Institute.

Having had the opportunity to represent girls 4-H club work at County, State and Inter-State Meetings, I had a chance to see some of the larger institutions of learning for negroes in the State. This made me more anxious to go to school.

I knew that it would take money to go to boarding school, but with 6¢ cotton, it was needless to hope for anything from my father's cotton crop. I would have to make some money for myself.

In 1932, through the kindness of my Home Demonstration Agent, Miss L. M. Upshaw and President J. F. Drake, I was given a chance to work in the cannery at the A. & M. Institute, Normal, Alabama. With the assistance of four students we canned, labeled and stored in the school's pantry 3,560 cans of vegetables.

Having done this work satisfactorily, I was thereby able to earn my entrance fee for my first term in boarding school. This relieved my parents of the responsibility of paying my expenses to enter the institution. It was through this work that I have since gained places to work in homes on the campus, and in this way I have been able to stay in school each year.

I am now happy to say, thanks to 4-H club work, I shall complete my Junior College work at the close of the present term.

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